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Fall 2012

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SFA Gardens *News*

Volume 7, Issue 4

Fall 2012

Notes from the Director

By Dr. David Creech

At my home on Swifthill, a wood heater carries the burden of keeping me warm in the winter. With the blowers blowing and the overhead fan spinning, I can turn this cold box of a home **into an oven. As far as I'm concerned, when there's food in the kitchen, the laundry is done, and my supply of firewood is OK – I'm pretty cheerful. Icing on the cake after that one-inch rain a few days ago, and now we're sliding into winter just about perfect. The garden is refreshed. Life couldn't be much better.**

Since we're gardeners, it's all about the weather, which was a lot kinder to us this year than the two years prior. The drought and heat of 2010 and 2011 are no more, having moved north into the Central Plains in 2012. East Texas has returned to close to normal. Our high temperatures were lower, there were a few more summer rains and the tornadoes stayed away. A big memory for 2012 was the flood on Sep. 29. It was one for the record books with 10 to 12 inches falling in 30 hours in Nacogdoches County. For SFA Gardens, the biggest test came to the *Taxodium* planting along the banks of LaNana creek. In March 2012, about 800 small *Taxodium* trees were planted along both banks of

the stretch of the creek that runs through the SFA campus. The trees were drip irrigated, mulched and kept weed free. A strategy that paid off this summer with excellent growth for a first-year planting. Most are 6 feet or taller, and calipers are over an inch. While Miss LaNana is rather docile most of the time, she can be pretty swift, mean and nasty when heavy rains arrive. When the late September deluge arrived, the trees, now nine months old, were well rooted in and of sufficient size and caliper to endure Miss **LaNana's wrath. A**

steel T-post driven about a foot from each small tree on the upstream side seemed to help. Even though many of our first-year trees went totally under water, were buffeted about for hours, and laid over flat, the planting lost a total of zero trees.

It took horticulture senior Spence Simmons a week to get all the trees propped back up and standing straight and tall. Conclusion: baldcypress is one tough tree in a waterway. It can hang on tightly during a flood. While other parts of the garden were hit with way too much water, it all

drained away quickly, and life has returned to normal.

The Fall Festival Plant sale was perfect. Perfect



The LaNana Creek leaves its banks, flooding the *Taxodium* collection.

weather, a perfect crowd, and interesting plants were everywhere. Dawn, Greg, volunteers and students brought in a very well organized event. Kudos to all! Our gross income was up a bit from the two years prior. No doubt, due to better weather this year.

Homeowners don't buy when record heat and drought are taking all the fun out of gardening.

With Trey Anderson **leaving the PNPC, we're** lucky Greg Grant agreed to step up to full time to take over the helm at the PNPC. We are now down to a

Amenities with Meaning

By Barb Stump

Garden amenities are typically construction items or additions that are not plants. One of my favorite amenities is the garden bench. They allow people to rest along trails and enjoy the colorful sights, bird calls and dappled shade in our gardens. They also call up memories or convey honor. Four of our 15 newest metal benches installed in the gardens fit this description. These four are of personal meaning to me and to others who have enjoyed the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden and the Gayla Mize Garden.

Three are memorial benches: In the past 22 months a number of people kindly made memorial donations in honor of my late husband, Michael M. Stump. These donations came from 12 members of the Texas chapter of the Azalea Society of America (ASA), a life member of the SFA Gardens and ASA member from Virginia, two local friends in Nacogdoches, and seven business colleagues from across the U.S. who had worked with Mike. I continue to be proud and honored by this generosity and remembrance that will continue on in gardens that

Mike loved helping build. As my life-partner you can imagine how he helped: taking me to Louisiana to get the very first purple spider azaleas from Miss Margie Jenkins; planting a lovely specimen tree—

Magnolia lenellii x 'Daybreak'; traipsing to national ASA conventions, again bringing back plants; and funding my own plant purchases for our azalea garden at home. So, it is fitting that three memorial benches for Mike are now ready for visitors: two in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden and one in the Gayla Mize Garden. One 8-foot bench is by **Bed 31 in the northwest "Azalea Cultivar Evaluation" area at an intersection of five paths**; another is in a colorful spot where people love to take photos of their friends and family in front of the yellow **deciduous and 'Salmon Solomon'** azaleas. A new 6-foot bench is in the shade along the main entrance trail to the Gayla Mize Garden. Metal labels will be affixed as I gather the friends in for special dedications. My heartfelt thanks go out to all these friends for their kind remembrances.

The fourth new "amenity with meaning" is an 8-foot bench near the entrance to the Gayla Mize Garden. This one honors "the force behind the garden," Charles Ray Mize. The view from this bench is big - across the whole 8-acre garden - like the man being honored. Without his inspiration and his supporting endowment, there would be no Gayla Mize Garden. He will be able to survey our work with ease as we continue to plant and develop his garden. There are also 11 more benches in this garden, **thanks to Duke Pittman's installation system and his student workers.** Watch for new plantings of deciduous azalea cultivars there in the next couple of months.

Events to look forward to:

- Fall color - now until mid-December
- Sasanqua camellias now until mid-December, followed by the japonica camellias until mid-March.
- *2013 Nacogdoches Azalea Trail: March 2-30 - More information coming on the Web soon.*

Notes, *continued*

lean, mean staff of six, plus one portly, bossy professor type, prone to dispensing chores, advice and wisdom.

The big excitement at the PNPC is that the Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Center will go from paper to reality! Located just north of the Tucker house, this new energy efficient building will be the backbone of our environmental education program and a hub for exciting

horticulture. If everything goes as planned, we can be basking around a wood heater next year right about this time!

At the Gayla Mize Garden and the Mast Arboretum, things are about to jump with a heavy early winter planting. In addition to hundreds of new deciduous azaleas, we have an interesting mix of trees and shrubs. The start of a *Crinum* collection is in place at the Gayla Mize

Garden, planted along each side of the western-most boardwalk near the entrance to the garden. A one-of-a-kind grove of 'Jim's Little Guy' *Taxodium* is a little further west and is now the backbone of a sunny wetland. Some wonderful garden benches are now calling the garden home.

Until next time, let's keep planting.

Pretty in Pink

By Dawn Stover

Ah...fall. As the sun takes a lower position in the sky, it grants a warm amber glow to the landscape. Vibrant orange pumpkins nestle among straw-colored corn stalks, both punctuated with the amber kernels of ornamental corn. The cool summer green of deciduous trees begins to heat up with rich yellows, reds and oranges. Scarecrows dressed in autumn's finest plaid sit atop yellowed straw watching brilliant orange monarchs and queens contrast against the deep blue autumn sky.

Wait a minute! What's all of this pink doing here? Mums, camellias, grasses, oh my! This pretty pink is pretty much everywhere. Not in a smothering sort of way, simply a nod here and there to Mother Nature's feminine side. Fall can definitely be pretty in pink. (An aside — after choosing the title of this article, I've decided to title all future talks and articles for the next year after titles of John Hughes' films. Wish me luck!)

A perennial favorite of ours, literally, is the perennial garden mum **'Country Girl.'** She never disappoints with her exuberant show of soft pink daisy-like flowers as October transitions to November. She's a healthy thing that will fill out a six foot area over time. Basal foliage persists throughout winter until new growth elongates in the spring. **It's a good idea to give her a pinch** now and again to help plants become full and to prevent flopping. Cut back by no more than a third each time, and stop giving haircuts around mid-July so the bud set is **not delayed.** **'Country Girl'** makes an excellent cut flower with a light,

pleasing fragrance.

Camellias, especially *sasanqua* selections and hybrids, begin their sweet song as the weather turns hospitable once more. *Sasanqua* camellias come in many shades of pink as well as white and the brick red of **'Yuletide.'** **'Hana Jiman'** is a free flowering *Camellia sasanqua* with a great overall habit and many



A lovely blossom of *Camellia* **'Hana Jiman'**

blossoms. Flowers are semi-double, really more single in my opinion, with large, sort of blousy white petals tipped in dark pink. The dark green foliage is quite healthy and nearly pest and disease free. **It's really an outstanding plant** and you can expect to find it in future SFA Gardens plant sales. **'October Affair'** is an early flowering *Camellia japonica* selection with perfect, formal-double blossoms with a blushed pink center and slightly darker outer petals. When the flower is fully open, the petals form a nearly perfect two-dimensional

star.

The real *pièce de résistance* is a **not so little bird we like to call 'Pink Flamingo.'** This outstanding fall blooming ornamental grass is the love child of two Texas natives. It beautifully marries the eastern *Muhlenbergia capillaris* with the western *Muhlenbergia lindheimeri* inheriting the size of the latter and the giant purplish flower plumes of the former. *Muhlenbergia* x **'Pink Flamingo'** begins blooming in late October and continues well into November and reaches a respectable height near 5 feet. Our giant blue bunny is nestled into a bed of **'Pink Flamingo'** and the white form of *Muhlenbergia capillaris* called **'White Cloud.'**

So many treasures, so little time. **I can't wait to find the hidden gems** only the passing seasons can uncover! As I write, the fiery side of fall is making itself known. If only for a **fleeting moment, we're given a** glimpse into the softer, prettier-in-pink side of Mother Nature. Cherish all that she offers!



Bunny, sculpture by Jeff Brewer, is surrounded by **'White Cloud'** and **'Pink Flamingo'** muhly grasses.

Confessions of a Professional Rustler

By Greg Grant

You've all heard of cattle rustlers, I'm sure. Heck, I have some in my own family! And by now, most of you have heard of the internationally famous Texas Rose Rustlers. I used to be one. I attended my first meeting on the front porch of **Pam Puryear's haunted house** (there was a coffin upstairs!) in Navasota, Texas. My mentor, Dr. William Welch invited me. I was working at The Antique Rose Emporium at the time. Pam took me in as one of her own, sharing her many secrets ranging from willow water to telepathic interception. It was nice being among like-minded folks. **They didn't just tend plants. They LIVED plants.**

This bunch didn't teach me to rustle as I was born that way, but they sure did legitimize my natural obsession to own every pretty flower that passed in front of my eyes.

Now before you get the wrong idea about plant rustling, let me explain a few things. **Rustling isn't about selfish greed to hoard all the plants you can squeeze into your horticultural oasis. It's about saving wonderful old forgotten plants from extinction. It's about diversity. And most importantly, it's about keeping memories alive.** Every garden plant has a wonderful personal history. These abandoned plants often string together tales of kings and queens, legendary plant explorers, visionary breeders, famous artists, wagon trails, great-grannies and childhood memories. No plant that earned its way into the Texas garden deserves to be thrown out forever.

I don't belong to the Texas Rose Rustlers anymore, though they are still actively rustling. I'm better rus-

tling alone rather than with a pack.

I gave a talk recently and afterward was asked the usual question of where they could obtain all the neat old fashioned plants that I had shown and praised. The lady said,



'Pam's Pink' honeysuckle blooms with Byzantine gladiolus.

"We didn't have grannies to give us all the stuff like you did!" Well guess what? I didn't inherit my garden fortune. I earned it. All my good plants didn't come to me; I went to them. From the time I was a kid, when I saw a tough, pretty plant, I set out to obtain it. We are all so spoiled that we think our favorite nursery should have every plant we want sitting there like soft drinks on a shelf. **Well unfortunately, it doesn't work that way.** They can only carry what's available to them. Sometimes we have to carry on ourselves.

I've propagated plants from graveyards to Great Britain. Some have come from abandoned home sites and others from little old ladies. **Don't ever be afraid to knock on someone's door to admire their plants.** Marie Daly of Longview shared her Mexican petunia and Christmas cactus with me. Mattie Rosprim of College Station gave me

starts of montbretia and Striped Beauty canna. I got Tiger Rose verbenas from three different sources in East Texas; my great aunt in Arcadia, an odd little woman in Garrison, and a very shy little lady outside of Crockett.

Mrs. Wheelless in Louisiana showed me how she farmed bulbs for sale and shared her purple violets. Another lady in Stanley, Louisiana, gave me a start of her **momma's tiger lilies from Mississippi.** My Philippine lilies came from Miss Christine Langston of the Arlam Community. Her entire property was covered with them. Pam

Puryear led me to 'Pam's Pink' honeysuckle in Navasota, and I got my oxblood lilies in College Station and some neat cannas out of a ditch on the side of the road in Garrison. My Grand Primo narcissus and double orange daylilies came from the old Burgay place, while my blue Roman hyacinths and Byzantine gladiolus came from the old Wheeler place. Thanks to my prodding, my Grandmother Emanis begged a start **of the old St. Joseph's lily from my Aunt Charley in Center, who in turn begged in from her neighbor.** I started with 12 plants of this old amaryllis hybrid and eventually had hundreds.

Blue Princess verbenas came from a nursery in England. I got three VIP petunia seed from a flower bed in Germany. John Fanick phlox came from a little lady's yard on the east side of San Antonio while Gold Star **esperanza came from a lady's west side yard in San Antonio.** She had big, healthy night-blooming jasmines outside her front door that smelled like candy at night.

Some neat plants occur right in the middle of the ones you already have. Marie Daly rose was a bud sport of Marie Pavié in my mom's backyard. Stars and Stripes pentas was a sport off of Ruby Glow in my trial bed at Lone Star Growers in San Antonio. And Pinwheel Princess and Ice Princess verbena were sports from Blue Princess in our flower beds at the SFA Mast Arboretum in Nacogdoches.

The bottom line is that many great plants are out there for the finding, asking, begging or swapping. The late Eddie Fanick of San Antonio once told me that everything I needed in life would be found right under my nose. He said most people miss out because they strut around with their noses in the air. I think I've left an expletive or two out in there, but you

get the point. How prophetic he was.

Like everything else in life, the best plants belong to those that work the hardest to get them. A case in point: I got a tiny cutting of



Blue Roman hyacinths in an antique jar

the then-new Pink Frost sweet potato from a public greenhouse in New York. I kept it sealed in a coke bottle from the trash can for

several days in the hotel. I then carried it in the car from New York to North Carolina where I put it in the mail to my friend and cohort Dr. Jerry Parsons in San Antonio. He rooted it for me and then provided nice gallon plants the next time I came to visit. Rustling partners are vital in this business!

There are many more tales to tell (and some I can't, according to my legal representative) but I'm supposed to write an article, not a book! The next time you see me, don't ask who gave me those plants, but ask me how I got them instead.

Now before you head out digging and thrashing about in abandoned yards, vacant lots, and cemeteries, you might keep in mind my 10 commandments of plant rustling. **The light's too dim in jail to grow most flowers.**

Greg's Ten Commandments of Plant Rustling

1. Always ask permission to go on private property. Nobody likes a trespasser; Texans will shoot you!
2. Always offer money, plants or your first born for the plant you are seeking. Heirlooms are priceless.
3. Never dig plants or take cuttings when they are in full bloom.
Wait till they look ugly and homely when nobody cares.
4. Never dig the whole clump unless a dozer is behind you waiting to make a parking lot.
Every surviving plant deserves to stay in its historical position.
5. Always put the biggest bulbs back in the original hole so they will bloom again next year.
Take the smaller offsets for your garden. They'll grow big, too.
6. Write down and remember the name of the person and place with the plant.
Garden history is a wonderful subject, and somebody has to remember.
7. Fertilize, groom, deadhead and water the plant you are propagating from so it will be better after you leave it than when you found it.
8. Photograph the plant in its original site, preferably with it' owner, home or neighboring structure.
The setting is important to garden historians like myself.
9. Make cuttings or offsets a priority over digging the plant.
There's no sense marring the Mona Lisa if you can create a clone.
10. ALWAYS clean up your mess. Make it look like you were never there!

Les and Theresa Reeves Lecture Series—2013

The SFA Gardens Theresa and Les Reeves Lecture Series is held 7 to 8:30 p.m. in room 110 of the Stephen F. Austin State University Agriculture Building. The lectures are free and open to the public.

Jan. 17 **Landscape Soils...Growing from the Ground Up!**
Derald Harp, Texas A&M Commerce

Feb. 14 Urban Landscape Philosophy and Strategies in China
MengMeng Gu, Texas A&M University

March 21 Grow Your Garden and Enjoy a Sip of Tea!
Ed Bush, Louisiana State University

April 18 Everything You Wanted to Know About Pecans but Were Afraid to Ask
Leo Lombardini, Texas A&M University

May 16 **The OCBG, Proving That There's Plant Life Here**
Todd Lasseigne
Oklahoma Centennial Botanical Garden

June 20 Making Mercer Magnificent - Opportunities and Challenges
Darren Duling, Mercer Arboretum

Jul 18 Backyard Habitat Gardening for Dummies
Julie Shackleford, The Conservation Fund

Aug. 15 Lessons in Nature: Reflections on the Meaning of Life
From a Plantsman's Point of View
Paul Cox, retired director
San Antonio Botanical Gardens

Sept. 19 Plant Breeding, Garden Performance and New Product Development
Wayne Pianta, Ball Horticultural Company

Oct.17 The Critters that Slither and Hop in Your Garden
Matthew Kwiatkowski
Stephen F. Austin State University

Nov. 21 Making Organic Gardening Easy
Jackie Carlisii, The Grass and Rock Shoppe

Dec 19 Why Raising a Garden and Raising Kiddos Is About the Same Thing
(It's All About Breaking Rules)
Dave Creech, SFA Gardens

Garden Seminars - 2013

Jan. 19: Vegetable Gardening 101 with Dawn Stover and Greg Grant. 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Room 118, Ag Building. \$30 members, \$35 non-members, \$55 participant and spouse.

Feb.16: Rainwater Harvesting with David Parish. 9 a.m. -12 p.m., room 118, Ag Building. \$50 members, \$60 non-members - rain barrel included in price.

May 11: Fairy Gardens: Miniscule and Magical Creations with Dawn Stover. 9 a.m.-noon, Room 118, Ag Building. \$30 members, \$35 non-members.

June 22: Canning and Pickling Your Bountiful Garden Harvest with Dawn Stover and Greg Grant. 9 a.m.-noon, Room 118, Ag Building. \$25 members, \$30 non-members.

Sept. 14: Naked Ladies and Oxbloods: Fall Bulbs in Texas Bus Tour to Arcadia Texas with Greg Grant. 9am-noon, meet in Ag Building at 9 a.m. \$25 members, \$30 non-members.

Nov. 9: Gifts from the Garden: Herbal Soap Seminar with Elyce Rodewald. 9 a.m.-noon, Room 118, Ag Building. \$25 members, \$30 non-members.

Dec. 7: Deck the Halls: Creating Evergreen Decorations for the Holidays with Dawn Stover. 9 a.m.-noon, Room 118, Ag Building. \$25 members, \$30 non-members.

Family Fun Day Events—2012/2013

Programs are held at SFA Pinewoods Native Plant Center, 2900 Raguet St., Nacogdoches.
Day trips will meet at SFA Pinewoods Native Plant Center and travel to site.

Dec. 7, 2012: Evening Campfire program with Dutch oven cooking.
6 p.m. - 9 p.m., SFA Pinewoods Native Plant Center.
\$10 per family.

Jan. 12, 2013: Day Trip to Texas Forestry Museum/Family Service Project.
9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Lufkin. \$15 per family/\$25 van transportation.

Jan. 26, 2013: Kid Fish – Trout Fishing Event
Sponsored by Nacogdoches Parks and Recreation.
9 a.m. - 2 p.m., meet at Lakeside Park, 4800 Pearl St.
No cost.

Feb. 9, 2013: Day Trip to Ragtown Recreation Area
8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Sabine National Forest. \$15 per family/\$25 van transportation.

March 2, 2013: Hiking Nacogdoches Trails
9 a.m. - noon, Lanana Creek and SFA Recreational trails. \$10 per family.

April 6, 2013: Day trip: Ratcliff Lake.
8 am – 4 pm, Davy Crockett National Forest. \$15 per family/\$25 van transportation.

April 20, 2013: SFA Garden Gala Day Plant Sale and Earth Day
Plant Sale: 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.,
Earth Day: 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., SFA Pinewoods Native Plant Center. No cost.

May 4, 2013: Day Trip to Lake Sam Rayburn Nature Center
8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Caney Creek Recreation Area/Angelina National Forest.
\$15 per family/\$25 van transportation.

July 13, 2013: Picnic and Water Fun
10 a.m. - 2 p.m., West Park Lake Nacogdoches.
(Location may be subject to change.)
\$15 per family/\$25 van transportation.

For further information and to register, contact Kerry Lemon at 936.468.1832 or email lemonkb@sfasu.edu.

Nacogdoches Naturally is sponsored by SFA Pinewoods Native Plant Center and funded through a More Kids in the Woods Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture U.S. Forest Service.





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Come Grow With Us!

Auburn or Bust!

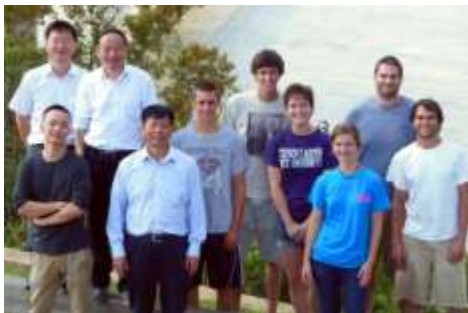
By David Creech

SFA Gardens is all about students, staff, volunteers and fans supporting our mission of plant celebration. One of our flags has been traveling far and wide to learn something new, meet the movers and shakers in horticulture, and rejoice in the excitement and diversity of our work. I recently had the opportunity to grab a few students for an expedition and ended up with a caravan to Auburn University for the International Plant Propagators Society conference.

IPPS is a gathering made up of growers and academics interested in the art and science of producing plants. Most importantly, it is the best chance for our students to mingle with and get to know the trend setters in the nursery world. My truck was part of the caravan because we needed the space to haul almost 100 strange, rare and unusual plants

for the conference plant auction.

Our host, Auburn University, planned and executed a first-class event – banquets, nursery and garden tours, and a program full of excellent presentations. To be honest, this was one of those epic adventures. The pre- and post-conference tours in-



Chinese horticulturists and SFA students on the road to Auburn University included (front row, from left) Wang Xiaoxiong, Yin Yunlong, Kyle Giannette, Felicia English, Amny Rose, Eric Golestan, (back row) Yu Zhaoguang, Zhang Xi He, Spence Simmons and Ken Moyer.

cluded visits to Callaway Gardens, **Hills and Dales Estate, Young's Plant Farm #2**, the Paterson Greenhouse Complex at Auburn University, Southern Growers Nursery, Moor and Davis Nursery, and 3AM Growers. Whew! Tack on a full day-and-a-half of conference presentations, and **you've got a great learning experience** for all of us.

Our six lucky SFA students came away with a real world-view of the nursery industry: the good, the bad and the ugly.

A real twist to the trip was that it coincided with the visit of my Chinese friends - Wang Xiaoxiong, Zhang Xi He, Yu Zhaoguang and Yin Yunlong - two academics and two nurserymen. As a result, our road trip provided a little multicultural flavor for everyone. We all had a great time, learned a lot and, most importantly, survived!